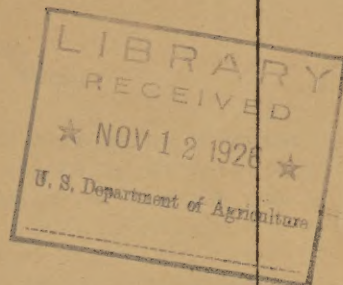


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# COUNTY PLANNING

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## COUNTY PLANNING

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The greatest asset in building and executing successful programs of extension work is vision - having a vision and believing so fervently in that vision that it must come true. Michael Angelo was thought mad when he suddenly left a group of friends and set to work chiseling a rough stone. When questioned by his friends, Michael Angelo replied: "No, I am not mad. I have seen an angel in this stone more beautiful than the world has ever seen, and I must uncover it." The county extension workers who succeed must see the county problems as an artist sees the rough stone or canvas. They must have the vision of a county as a finished product. They must see the shacks and mere buildings converted into homes. They must see a possible change of the difficulties that lie in the way, both human and economic. People, as well as soils, crops, and animals present the unknown and mysterious factors. Hence, our knowledge must extend beyond crops and animals to the people who make up farm homes.

In our enthusiasm to make our vision come true, we too frequently think in terms of organization for organization's sake. It is usually easy to organize, but it is a difficult thing to create an organization which has a self-starter, not continuously needing cranking up. Great cities are seldom built on a selected spot. Many remnants of built-to-order cities stand as mute reminders of dreams, while smoke-stacks break the sky line where once ran a calf path. And so it is with organization. Both the organization and the program in a county should evolve out of the needs understood by the farm people concerned. They should be made to realize the answer to difficulties or needs through demonstrations that demonstrate, prior to developing with them the organization or program.

Our earliest instruction by the founder of the work, Dr. Seaman A. Knapp, was "Do not confuse people by elaborate programs - the average man like the crow can not count more than three - do the next thing." Organization sometimes swallows up the chief human joy, the pride of sovereignty. If the first step is successful, the next step will be taken more easily until the demonstrator will follow unquestionably the extension worker. The most successful extension worker sees the way clearly, is at least "two jumps in the lead," and is most proficient in getting others to do rather than doing himself. Such a procedure arouses interest, inspires confidence, spurs the ambition, and finally leads others to feel a living, inspiring spirit of mutual effort, whereas action which savors of self-aggrandizement on the part of the extension worker fails. It takes people only a short time to find out what is back of the whole scheme of things. Farm people do not want to be saved - they wish to save themselves, but tagged leadership or leadership appointed prior to achievement in extension work may only arouse jealousy





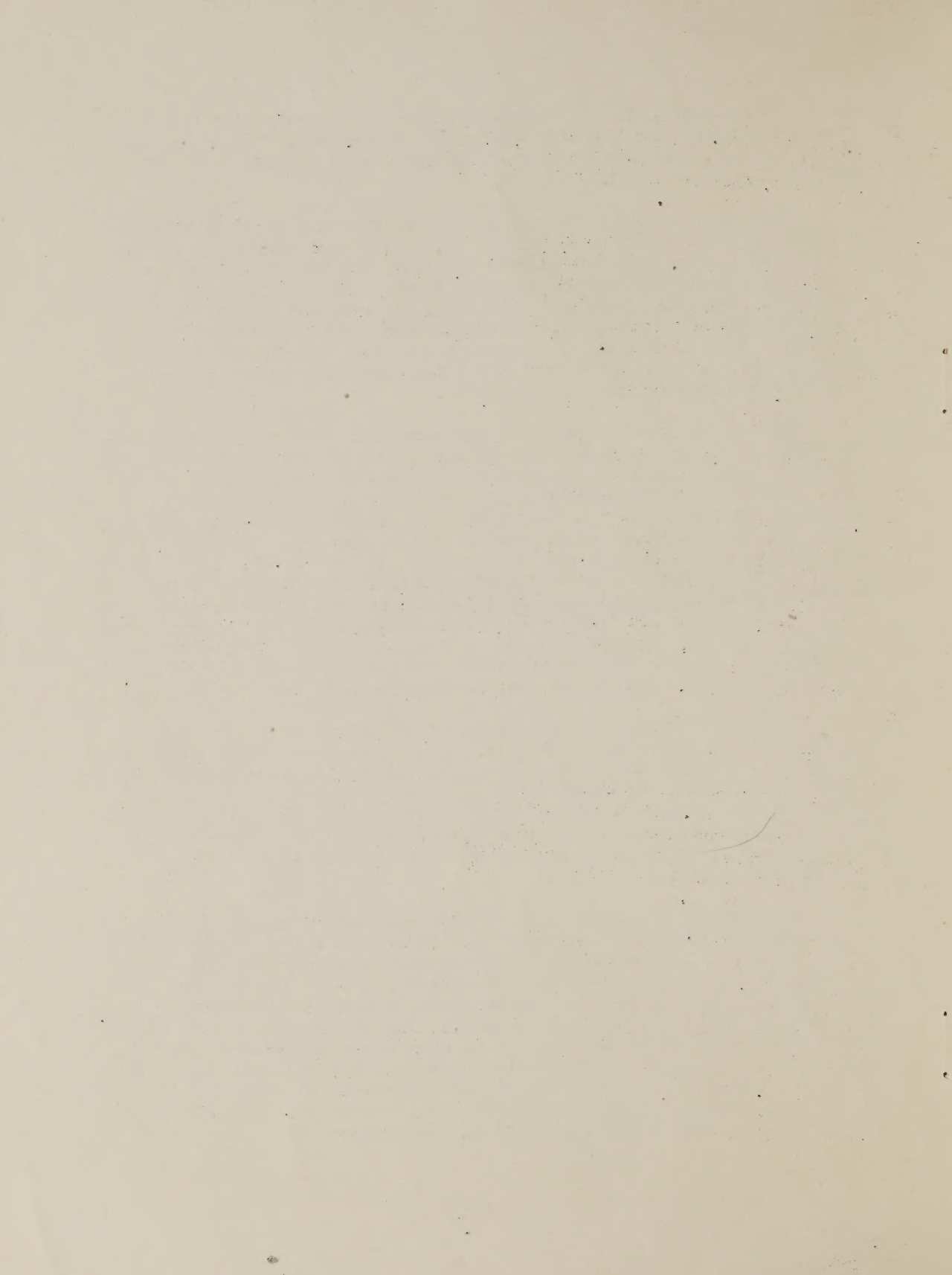
and general discord. It is doubtful whether it is advisable to use the term "leadership" when planning work with local people. This does not infer, however, that local leadership should not be developed and responsibility be assigned.

Some one has said: "You can fill a man's head full of learning and even put up the sideboards to hold it on, but if his heart is not in his work, he will ditch the whole darned outfit." Interest which is first aroused by improvement made on the home farm or that of a neighbor is more effective. The human instinct to imitate, emulate, and surpass will do the rest if we are on the job. This compelling trait of human nature accounts for the fact that farmers and their wives operate as did their grandparents. It also accounts for the fact that many grandmothers now have bobbed hair and display their knees.

One of the greatest mistakes many extension workers are making today is depending on words of wisdom pedagogically administered rather than the result demonstration which answers the economic problem under discussion. The result demonstration is not only the very foundation or hub of extension work, but offers the most forceful art of persuasion. It impels attention, inspires confidence, creates desire, and prompts decision and action in a way that excels any other method yet discovered. After a farmer or farm wife has first seen the benefits and felt the financial returns or comfort that the demonstration brings and experiences the manifestation of respect of neighbors, recognized achievement coupled with a thorough knowledge of our work may prompt decision to render any service called for by the extension worker. Achievement is the best soil in which ambition grows, and "ambition is the golden key that unlocks the energy of the human mind."

In many instances too large a percentage of the work is placed on the farms of the more wealthy farmers. This is done because it is usually the easiest course of action and appears on the surface to offer the greatest support of the work. If great care is not taken, however, not only will jealousy arise among farm people but the false idea of monopolized leadership will develop and the more unfortunate conclude that finance is the limiting factor, as is sometimes the case with farmers living adjacent to experiment stations.

Young agents not properly supervised sometimes ride hobbies prompted by training they may have had, which in turn may not meet the economic needs of the county. This onceled to the development of stereotyped hand-me-down programs sent to the agents by the supervisors. A more recent development is the patent project which is supposed to be fitted into the county program. This has, in some instances, led to shallow thinking on the part of agents. To illustrate-the speaker was invited to inspect two high-scoring kitchens in a county. One could not help being impressed with the improvement made, but in one instance it seemed that too much money was involved and the pantry shelf was not provided with fruits and vegetables. The county agent who took me out stated that his wife could not afford such





conveniences. When we passed from the kitchen to the dining room, it was noted that new furniture and rugs had been purchased in keeping with the kitchen. This impressed me with the fact that the old furniture might have been renovated and rag rugs made. When we stopped in the hall for a chat, new wicker furniture and rugs again caused one to think about the money outlay and about the opportunity for renovating furniture which had no doubt gone to the attic. But what impressed the speaker most was that neither of the prize kitchens had running water and yet the opportunities for such work were most excellent in a part of the county. As we drove over the county the next day a count was made of seven flowing wells in front yards, none of which were piped to the kitchens. One could not help noting the long stretch of luxuriant weeds made possible by the water flowing down the roadside ditch, about the only green vegetation, due to the intense drought. Again one wondered why this water could not flow through the kitchen into and irrigate a small family garden and perhaps furnish a small surplus of vegetables to supply the near-by hotel which could not get good vegetables shipped in except from a great distance.

Another patent project that the writer has heard many county agents comment unfavorably on because of the flare-backs from farmers, is the ton-litter project. In practically every instance the county was importing great quantities of corn at a price prohibitive to profitable swine feeding. Hence, economical corn production was the controlling factor, and the problem needing attention. In one instance the failure of the ton-litter project under similar conditions did do great good, in that it set the agent to work to get a variety of corn which would mature prior to a dry spell which usually occurred at corn-maturing time. Permit me to say by way of explanation, that it is not so much the project as the use made of it that is at fault. Definite planning is certainly worth while, but the project must be so handled as to offer suggestions which may fit certain difficulties, but certainly not all.

If we would think the local situation through and consider the project outlined as merely suggestive for our method of procedure, based on the interests of the people, we would make more rapid progress. Our collective experience points to the fact that all group action must be centered upon a commodity basis and minimize discussions of a promiscuous nature before groups of people. For example, in a group of farm people several may be interested in poultry and be elated with this line of discussion, whereas those interested in swine may be experiencing a sense of boredom verging on nervous prostration, while feeling that poultry is a necessary evil. This might lead to the suggestion that we center the major effort upon the major commodity, say cotton. If, for example, we had pushed economic cotton production more in some counties, and had fit the livestock projects into the live-at-home programs, supporting, instead of at the expense of cotton, would we not have progressed further with both? Business men would have supported such a scheme while many of them found little enthusiasm in dairying as such. In many instances they flatly refused to finance and insisted on the usual number of bales of cotton. This is where both agents need to study together the best method of procedure.





As has been previously indicated, the unified county program must evolve out of demonstration work established on the farm and in the home. By so doing the occupants of many farm homes and many observant business men have a clearer conception of the problems that obtain and the solution to these problems. Everybody can read the lesson written on the ground or in home improvement. With such a foundation it is relatively easy to secure mass attack. Experience seems to have shown that this is best done through the development of an advisory council, made up largely of demonstrators and fostered by interested business men.

Many counties have developed programs by bringing men and women representatives from the communities, but from my first-hand study and help with this work in many counties, I feel that far too many farm and home programs are developed separately, giving the public the impression that extension work is made up of two organizations requiring separate financing.

Although there are many methods of developing programs, I will attempt to give a composite picture of the method of procedure as I see it. The first step in developing a county plan is undoubtedly that of thinking the whole scheme of things through, to obtain a balanced system of agriculture and home economics. This should be done in a preliminary way by the two district agents in conference with the two county agents, when the work has advanced to the point where all the people can be made acquainted with the program. First, an attempt should be made to get data from census figures or surveys which will indicate the conditions that obtain in the county. Second, attempt to establish milestones of progress of extension work. Third, follow up methods of extending the information, made manifest by demonstrations on the farm and in the home as planned in the program.

It would be ideal to work out the first step with interested committeemen representing the communities, but it will suffice to present the facts and depend upon the committeemen to suggest the remedy based on their experience as demonstrators. For example, if the dairy committee, made up of men and women, is shown that the county is  $2\frac{1}{2}$  million gallons of milk short, the question of malnutrition and lowered vitality of people naturally arises. When the fact is brought to their attention that the local cow only produced 250 gallons per year in their county, whereas the average cow in the United States produces 393, the question naturally arises, What is the reason and what can be done about it? Several of those present will have the remedy which may be an acre of Laredo soybeans for every cow and a definite grain ration. If, instead of talking balanced rations, which means nothing to the average person, a formula, for example, made up of 200 pounds of wheat bran, 100 pounds of corn meal, 100 pounds of ground oats, and 100 pounds of cottonseed meal is advocated, it is immediately in the form of the known rather than of the unknown. Personal service is thus minimized and mass opinion formed. Not only the county agent but the home demonstration agent has something definite to present to the farmer and the housewife, and the recommendation is in the hands of all farmers as soon as the program is printed. It comes out under the names of those who have been successful and will be tried out by many who would not go to either agent for advice.





Approval or modification is usually made of each commodity or interest plan worked out at a general meeting made up of all committeemen. It has been found very advantageous to invite leading business men and bankers to such meeting. Some States are also inviting representative boys and girls from each community. This recognition of superior powers of comprehension may change a job to a pleasure. Such procedure causes them to feel they have the responsibility of the plan on their own shoulders, and a part to play in rendering service, in answering economic problems, rather than working for the prize as a goal. Thus, the rural boy and girl power is directed into channels of greater usefulness. It may be possible to create in the minds of these young people visions so magnificent as to put to shame even the angels of Michael Angelo - visions of a new world of prosperity, beauty, and comfort.

Time will not permit full discussion of methods of follow up, which one extension worker has referred to as the spokes which revolve about the demonstration, the hub of extension work. After publicity has been given to the general program and the work for the year has been established, various means for calling attention to successful work are used. It is possible through circular letters, field and home meetings, tours, educational exhibits, and other kinds of publicity to attract and hold the attention on the major problems and methods of solving them. But with all this work we must realize that no man relishes being managed. Pope said: "Men must be taught as if you taught them not, and things unknown proposed as though forgot." All phases of publicity must be placed on the work done and not on the personality. All are interested in the accomplishment of another and will realize the problem solved by the other fellow and apply it to himself. It is our job to make this possible. The experience related by a demonstrator who is one of the group will have a far greater influence on mass opinion than if presented by the county agent or any other extension worker, and the demonstration will speak loudly for itself if it has been properly conducted and definite measurements made.

In reviewing these methods, which are being used in different States, I am not assuming that you are not thoroughly acquainted with them. I merely feel that taking stock of methods of obtaining greater accomplishment is worth while. There is little doubt that more study should be given to methods of developing programs and measuring sticks devised for measuring individual and collective accomplishments.

I envy you the opportunity you have of developing and executing first-hand, plans creating ideals not only for the good of the present generation, but for the good of all generations to come. Carlyle said: "Oh, it is great, and there is no other greatness, to make one nook of God's creation more fruitful, better, more worthy of God; to make some human heart a little wiser, manlier, happier, more blessed and less accursed."





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